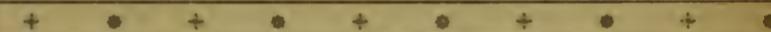


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•♦• ORATION •♦•

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Hon. Charles H. Bartlett •♦•

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE

•♦• Soldiers' •♦• Monument

- 07 -

AMHERST, N. H.

•♦• JUNE 19, 1890 •♦•





ORATION
OF
HON. CHARLES H. BARTLETT,
OF MANCHESTER, N. H.

AT THE
DEDICATION
OF THE
SOLDIERS' MONUMENT

AMHERST, N. H.,

JUNE 19, 1890.

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ORATION.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

The historian of this venerable and widely celebrated township, in the opening sentence of his opening chapter, informs the student of our colonial history that the town of Amherst had its origin in a grant of land made by the General Court of Massachusetts to certain citizens of that province for services rendered in the Narragansett war of 1675-76. This declaration alone, without the promptings of further suggestion, might naturally prepare our minds to look for and expect a marked development of the martial spirit in the descendants of such an ancestry, reared in this atmosphere and drawing their sustenance from this soil, which was first awakened to the approach of civilization by the footfall of the citizen soldier.

And it would seem to require but little stretch of poetic fancy, or oratorical license, to say that the god of war stood as godfather at the cradle of the little infant democracy, outlined upon the western border of that narrow belt of sparsely inhabited country, then extending along the Atlantic coast, and, as it to make the military impression perfect

ual and ineradicable, conferred upon it, at the baptismal font, the name of the most conspicuous military character then associated with the colonies, that of the commander-in-chief of the British forces of North America,—a name which it has borne and honored for more than a century, and a name which is never spoken by son or daughter, however widely roaming, but with true filial pride and affection.

But however prominent or conspicuous the military element may appear in the inception, it must not be inferred or understood that the moral or intellectual welfare of the people was overlooked or even subordinated, for we find that in the sub-division of this grant, one lot was assigned to the first settled minister, one lot to the ministry, and one to that great American institution, the common school.

So far, then, as the art of war entered into the habits of the pioneer settlers, it was an art cultivated and practiced for defensive purposes only, to give protection in the field and security at the fireside against assaults that were never tempered with mercy nor conducted by the rules of civilized warfare, against a foe who recognized no non-combatants, who respected not defenceless womanhood, the innocence of childhood, or the helplessness of the couch of sickness and pain, a foe who came not with drum beat and banners waving, but skulking in ambush, or like a thief at night, under cover of its darkness.

So much of the knowledge of the art of war, so much of skill and accomplishment in its practice as would enable them to cope with this cunning and relentless foe, was a necessity of their existence. Undisturbed and unmolested, the busy hand seized the implements of husbandry and

plied them with tireless energy; but in the presence of peril and danger it grasped the trusty musket with a courage that never faltered and a spirit that sought no alternative save victory or death.

It may not be wholly inappropriate before proceeding to the consideration of the subject which is more especially the theme of the hour, to pause a moment at this milestone in the history of this grand old township and contemplate and briefly review the Ambient of the past, and especially of the early time with reference to the history of this government and country, for how can I more appropriately present to you the men whom we especially honor to-day than by first presenting to you their ancestry as history has photographed them to us? To do this intelligently we must first of all remember that Ambient was one of the first born of the children of the Province and State of New Hampshire, that she attained her maximum growth more than a century ago and contained within her ancient borders, at the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, a greater population than she bears to-day, and that such was her relative size and consequence that she ranked within five or six of the head of the column in the list of the important towns of the State.

I know, indeed we all know, that the aggressive forces of our modern civilization and the potent agencies of modern industries have cut new channels of commerce which have left many a once conspicuous social, political, and business center far to the right and the left of the new ways that now bear the tramp of the great industrial processions of the hour. It would be idle to say that this beautiful agricultural town of Amherst is not upon this list. But it

may be some consolation to know and to feel that these changes have been wrought by forces and agencies over which her people could exercise no control, and which they were powerless to resist.

The story of the part taken by the town of Amherst in the war of the Revolution, which naturally claims something of our thought to-day, is a grand, beautiful, and touching story, unsurpassed in history or fiction, legend or song, for ardent, lofty patriotism, dauntless courage, and sublime devotion to country and to liberty. None were on the field before her, none surpassed her in soldierly achievements. Before the opening gun had fired the shot "heard round the world," before the fields of Lexington and Concord were baptized in immortality, before the clash of arms and the shock of battle on the heights of Bunker Hill, before any of these had electrified the land, Amherst had lifted her hand and struck her initial blow for liberty.

On the memorable night of December 16, 1773, while the Dartmouth and her consorts were idly rocking on the restless tide in Boston Harbor, the "sons of liberty," few in numbers, but daring and resolute in purpose, were silently and impatiently preparing to open the first act in the great drama which was to settle the momentous issue so freighted with good or ill to human kind, whether this land should henceforth bear the blight and mildew of the tyrant's tread or smile and blossom with liberty and become laden with the fruits of a marvelous and unparalleled prosperity. It was not the ships nor their cargoes that excited such terrible resentment, for these were useful, harmless, valuable, and welcome ; but those cargoes, however harmless or valuable, could not pass the custom-house gates, through

which alone could foreign products touch our shores, without the payment of tribute which admitted the right of taxation without representation.

Although an empire powerful on land and sea was behind them demanding payment of the tribute, yet that handful of brave men were resolved not only to protest against the tyrannical exaction, but to hurl open defiance in the face of kingly power.

Among those true and daring men, as brave as the bravest, as powerful as the strongest, and second in ardor and patriotism to none, the only representative from the province of New Hampshire so far as authentic history or tradition informs us, was Thompson Maxwell of Amherst. Later on he fought at Lexington and Concord before enlistment, but found an opportunity to enroll himself and receive the appointment of lieutenant before the next collision. It would seem to violate all sense of justice on any occasion when the valor of Amherst's sons is the theme of the hour, not to mention the name of Thompson Maxwell.

The patriotism of Amherst in that timorous era was not of the shrilling, dormant order. It needed no drum-beat, no bugleblast, no bellowing gun of war to arouse her to action, and no sooner was the war-cloud seen to lift its sable crest above the eastern horizon than one third of all her population, capable of bearing arms, were on the march to Cambridge. Wherever engaged they lost no time in searching for beaten paths but always beat down new ones that led straight up to the enemy's front. More than seventy Amherst men fought the British foe in the rude redoubts of Bunker Hill; more than half a hundred,

under the immortal Stark, aided in beating back the invaders at Bennington, while on other fields, wherever New Hampshire troops were engaged, her sons were found in force and everywhere distinguished themselves for the highest soldierly qualities.

Her roll of three hundred, who went forth from her hillsides and valleys ready and eager to sacrifice their all for liberty and independence, constitutes a galaxy of heroes unsurpassed in historic record. Their fame may not be so widely celebrated in song and eulogy as the immortal three hundred Spartans, who, under Leonidas, disputed the pass of Thermopylæ against the Persian host on the Maliac coast, but their patriotism was no less ardent, their courage as unflinching unto death as theirs of ancient renown.

I have dwelt thus much at length upon the historical features of your town, because as I looked into the record and ran my eye over its pages so illumined with grand and heroic achievements, it seemed to me that I could not pass over in silence this glorious and distinguished past without injustice to those to whose memory this column is to-day dedicated.

Glorious, indeed, it is, in the light of their own achievements, but from the open page of history, which tells the story of ancestral valor, sacrifice, and worth, there comes a ray of golden light to encircle and illuminate it with a halo of glory, which the mist of a century has not dimmed, and the mists of other centuries cannot dissipate.

When I have said that the noble dead whose memory to-day this vast throng is assembled to honor, were the descendants of such an ancestry and that they were

worthy of them, praise, so far as it can be formulated in human speech, reaches its climax and eulogy is exhausted. More indeed may be said, phrases may be multiplied, but nothing they add. From such an ancestry who but patriots and heroes could come? While the spirit of liberty is thus transmitted from sire to son, the fires upon her altars can never become extinguished.

In the war of the great Rebellion, upon which our thoughts are more particularly centered to-day, Amherst did her duty, did it unstintingly and well. Those who went to the front, and those who bore the new burdens at home, proved themselves equal to the trying emergency suddenly and most unexpectedly cast upon them. The fifty thousand dollars which flowed through her treasury to aid, uphold, and sustain the cause, showed that those who went forth to do battle were true representative types of those who remained, but holding themselves in readiness to respond to any call which the emergencies of war might bring to their doors.

No sooner was it found that armed resistance to the authority of the government must be met and overcome with loyal armies, than the citizens of this town ascertained and resolved, with no dissenting voice, "to pledge their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor," to their country's cause; and it was at once voted to raise the pay of all her soldiers to eighteen dollars per month. Every man who enrolled himself in his country's service to fill the quota of Amherst, went forth with the consciousness that not only the prayers and benedictions of his townsmen would go with him wherever the fortunes of war might bear him, but that those he might leave behind were in the care and

keeping of friends who, whatever might befall him, would have a loving care and solicitude for them. The fact that fifty per cent of all liable to military duty shouldered their muskets and went to the field of battle, shows how deeply and profoundly this people were moved by the great conflict, and how the martial spirit that so distinguished their ancestry had descended without abatement through succeeding generations. The Home Guard, which met in the spring and summer of 1861 upon this common for drill and practice in the manual of arms, was but the re-appearance in other flesh and bone of the Minute Men who learned the same maneuvers on the same spot nearly a century before. Thus history repeats itself. Thus in the mirror of the present we see the glories of the past. True, the issue was not the same. The old question of independence or of subordination to another sovereignty was settled by those Minute Men and their comrades in arms, and settled forever; but in the progress of our national development, dangers within had been evolved no less serious than those which our fathers encountered from without.

The assaulted flag, the imperiled national unity, summoned to their defence the same sterling quality of patriotism, of courage, endurance, and self-sacrifice, which gave to the United States of America a place among the nations of the earth. The call came as suddenly, as unexpectedly, as the lightning's flash from a cloudless sky, but the response was ready and there was no parley for delay. There was no blanching of cheek, no tremor of voice, no faltering of step, no counting of cost. War was new, but the high sense of duty was old, and the qualities

demanded buried. Every noble attribute at the Amherst of 1775 reappeared in the Amherst of 1803.

It would be pleasant indeed to particularize, to repeat names and relate personal history and reminiscence upon this occasion; but all the names in Amherst's long roll of honor cannot be spoken, and if any are spoken, whose can be omitted? The multiplicity of exercises in the program of the day enforces brevity in this part of it and forbids individual mention.

To say that this monument is dedicated only to the memory of those whose names are inscribed upon it, that it speaks of them and them only, would unparliamentarily narrow and restrict the full and grand significance of this day's commemoration. For them it is indeed, but no less for all of Amherst's sons who bade adieu to friend and kin, shouldered their muskets and strapped their haversacks upon their backs and placed their lives between their country and her enemies. It is their loving, respectful tribute and memorial to them all.

A great master has said that monuments and orology belong to the dead. May we not anticipate that they hands will yet carry this memorial work to a more logical and natural finish, and when all of Amherst's sons who bore their part in the great war, which this monument commemorates, have joined the advance-guard who have gone before, they should then place upon its now unlettered faces other tablets of bronze containing all the remaining names upon the honored roll, so that in its perfected state to the true points of the compass it will unfold the names of all alike who deserve the imperishable record? Into

the care and keeping of the youth of Amherst, who will behold that day, I commit this thought.

Not one jot or tittle would we abate from the full measure of the glory of those who fell and perished in the struggle; yet it is but just to those survivors who passed the same ordeal, the same exposure, to say that it takes the same soldierly qualities to face death upon the battle-field that it does to suffer it. Whether the soldier falls or survives is the mere accident of fortune, and we should not meet the full requirements of the occasion did we not say to the members of the Charles H. Phelps Post of the G. A. R., whom a kind Providence has permitted to join in these solemn and impressive ceremonies, to all her sons who have come from far and near to join in this tribute to their fallen comrades, that Amherst remembers to-day that you all stood in battle array where those men fell as ready to join the ranks of the fallen as to fight on with the survivors.

There was a mingling of philosophy and grim humor in the remark of the brave Irish soldier who was stricken to insensibility on the battle-field, but who, on recovering consciousness, said to the faithful chaplain who was tenderly bending over him: "Sir, it is hard luck to suffer the agonies of death, and then be robbed by a minister of the glory of dying in battle."

We remember the fallen when and where they fell and our imaginations canopy the spot with a halo of undying glory; but we are not so apt to remember that those who fought by their side courted the track of the deadly missile as bravely and as serenely as they whose fate it was to encounter it on its death-dealing mission.

It was the good fortune of our New Hampshire troops to be wisely officered, well led, so that the essentials of successful military operations,—wise direction, unquestioning obedience, and prompt and effective execution, happily harmonized in their experiences in the field, and it will offend no officer, whatever his rank in the service, when I say that the officers were no less fortunate in the soldiers they had the honor to command.

It is easy to sing the praises of a conquering hero, to consecrate his name and strew his pathway with garlands, and to herald his coming with plaudits and popular acclam; and we are too apt to associate all the glory of war with him who wears the white plume and rides the caparisoned charger, but the sober, solemn work of war is done by the brave and hardy soldier who shoulders his musket from a sense of duty, fights for the right "as God gives him to see the right," but claims and seeks only the reward which comes from the consciousness of duty done.

More particularly was this the case in the war of the late Rebellion, where the whole mass of soldiery sprang as in a day from civil and peaceful pursuits, with hardly a man among them who had been trained in the profession of arms or sought the tented field from force of habit or occupation.

In no armies that ever contended for liberty or nationality in any other part of the globe, did the private soldier stand for so much, represent so much, embody so much in his individuality as did the soldiers of the loyal armies in that war. In intelligence, in personal character and worth, in the attributes of accomplished martial, the wide world never matched him in the annals

of war. It is easy to see why this was so. The ranks were filled from the same sources from which they were officered. They came from every profession; from colleges and seminaries of learning; from banks, counting rooms, shops, mills, farms; from every intellectual calling and every branch and line of industry. In the fact that he felt himself fit to command, the soldier saw no impediment to his serving in the ranks.

To strike a blow for his country, to strike it effectually and well, was his absorbing thought and ambition. If he found that opportunity in the ranks, he was content and so fought on to the end. Our armies graduated soldiers enough at the close of the war, fit to command, to officer all the armies on earth and officer them well.

We find to-day in Congress, in the executive chairs of state, in judicial and official stations of every grade, men who went into the war with the musket upon the shoulder, and laid down the same weapon at its close; not because they did not deserve promotion, not because they were not fitted for other duty of an apparently higher grade, but because they had found the place where the country needed them; where they could do good work, effective work; and with that they were content.

A regimental officer, whose command was famed for gallant conduct, on being asked to name men from his ranks for promotion, proudly responded: "If I should promote all of my men who deserve it, I should have a regiment of officers with not a private in it."

What wonder that such an army proved itself invincible and all-conquering? What end could come to such a struggle save that at Appomattox? The theorists who said

that the annals of history furnished no precedent for the suppression of a rebellion of such gigantic proportions, overlooked the fact that no other nation ever had such an army for the enforcement of its authority. Never before on the face of the earth was there such a concentration of high intellectuality and inflexible purpose, so marshaled, consolidated, solidified by the unifying hand of military discipline. An army indeed it was, fighting its battles with its feet upon the earth; but it was at least mobilized magazines of thought, ideas, and patriotic impulse, sowing not the seeds of waste and desolation, but scattering far and wide in its furrowed track the germs of every blessing that good government can confer upon mankind—germs that have burst into blossoms which have opened into fruitage, filling the land with fairness and broadening its atmosphere with the banges of every industry that won the cunning of human hands.

It was the fortune of the Amherst men to be connected with organizations that saw and felt much of war. Nearly half of them were in the "Fighting Fifth," and the "Bloody Tenth," but representatives of them were in every other regiment, except the Sixth, up to the Eleventh. Among them all there was not one who did not prove himself a soldier worthy of the cause near to his heart and worthy of the people for whom he stood. That some of them should rise through various promotions to responsible positions of command was expected and inevitable, and their names will always be honored and conspicuous upon New Hampshire's roll of her brave and gallant defenders. Their living presence here today forbids the words of compliment which will yet be spoken by more

eloquent lips than mine when opportunity is fitting, which soon enough must come. On this occasion we are also exceptionally honored by the presence of the survivors of that regiment which contained in its ranks so large a proportion of the Amherst soldiers, and which was so largely recruited from this county. Their most welcome presence enhances the interest, broadens and deepens the significance of the occasion, and gives stronger impulse to the patriotic ardor and sentiment which it is so well calculated to inspire.

Their presence here as an organization, a quarter of a century after their muster out and disbandment, proves the oneness of purpose which actuated them, and how deep and lasting are the friendships, born of long and close association, under circumstances of the greatest peril and danger. Such conditions develop the highest and noblest qualities of the human soul, and create a brotherhood that never loosens its grasp till touched by the cold finger that awaits us all. There is no chain which so binds men together as that whose links are welded in the white heat of battle.

If anything was wanting to show the perfect amalgamation of our foreign born with native American citizenship, the Tenth furnished it. If anything was wanting to show that in assuming that high duty our foreign born embraced the full measure of patriotic sentiment and devotion to the fortunes of their adopted country, the Tenth supplied it. If anything was lacking to prove that they were ready to defend her honor and uphold her authority by every sacrifice, even unto death, with all the ardor, impetuosity, and enthusiasm characteristic of their race, the Tenth removed

the lingering doubt when she left her dear nearer the stone wall on St. Mary's Heights than any other regiment that fought on the bloody field at Fredericksburg.

Side by side, under the banner of the gallant Tenth, the native and foreign born gave and received the blows which only war can give and take. Side by side they joined in the victorious shout when fortune smiled, and side by side they strove to relieve disaster and soothe the sting of defeat, and today on many a hillside, in many a valley, ploughed and furrowed by the dread engines of war, side by side they sleep the sleep of eternal rest.

To show what place this regiment has in the hearts of this people, I need do no more than point to the fact that of the twenty six names already inscribed upon this monument's tablet of bronze, ten of them are copied from the rolls of the Tenth. Muttered in with these survivors — mastered out by the grim messenger Death, but reformed and halting now at "peace rest" on the other shore for the coming of you whose ranks to-day show wider gaps than theirs.

It will not be expected that I shall detain you by a consideration of the causes which involved this people in that great conflict in which these survivors were engaged, and in which the noble dead whose memory we seek to honor gave up their lives that their country might live. The story has been so often told and the lessons to be drawn from it so often reported and so recently, on that great national day now but just past, and are so familiar to all that nothing can be added, and repetition is unnecessary.

We all recognize the fact that as the war of the Revolution settled the question of national independence, so

the war of the Rebellion settled the question of national unity. The great source of internal dissension, of sectional animosity, has been forever eradicated. It is no longer a “house divided against itself,” but with unity of purpose and fraternity of feeling, its fast multiplying millions are now coursing over the highway of empire, with possibilities limited only by the measure of fidelity to true citizenship.

To the cultivation and the development of that citizenship this work directly and most powerfully tends. Monumental columns, heroic statues, and memorial edifices are most striking and impressive patriotic literature, a literature that is read by all beholders, learned and unlearned, a literature that is common to all nations and all races of men. To the American, the German, the Frenchman, to all of every race and nationality, though speaking no tongue save that of their ancestors, it tells the same story. It addresses itself intelligently to every understanding and awakens common emotions in every heart in whatever clime the eye falls upon it.

As a book of history it is always open and its pages are ever exposed to the gaze of mankind. It never slumbers on neglected shelves, and the accumulating dust of years never gathers upon it. The busiest son of toil finds ample opportunity to peruse it and enrich his understanding by the story it impresses upon all, while his soul is ennobled by the contemplation of the lofty examples it spreads before him. It cannot be monopolized by the rich alone, for it is never closed to the poorest and the humblest. It is most honorable in its authorship no less than in its commemoration of noble deeds and the perpetuation of names.

"that were not born to die." This monument which rises in your midst, the object of such patriotic veneration to all, will not only bear to after times the names of the heroic dead indelibly engraved upon it, it will not only proclaim through brazen lips, speaking mightily though voiceless, the gospel of liberty, of loyalty, and of patriotism to coming generations, but it will ever bear most conclusive testimony to the generosity and patriotism of its builders. It will tell not only that those men gave up their lives for their country and its institutions, but it will declare also that you for whom this supreme sacrifice was made were worthy of it.

And when all the bands that joined in its erection are folded upon the pulseless breast; when all who out of their substance contributed to its cost shall have struck their tents and passed on; when up and down the face of the land not one who bore his part in the war of the great Rebellion shall remain among the living, this beautiful work will still stand and tell to other generations the story of ancestral glory and achievement, and inspire in other hearts the same heroic courage and lofty patriotism it so grandly celebrates.



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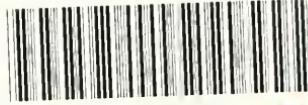
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